

## Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method for processing a transaction, comprising:  
5 determining a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;  
generating a random number; and  
rounding said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.  
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2. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed by a third party to said transaction.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number  
15 is supervised by a third party to said transaction.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number further comprises the step of obtaining a seller-generated increment value.
- 20 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number further comprises the step of obtaining a buyer-provided offset value.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein a buyer commitment to the transaction is obtained by means of currency submitted to a vending machine.  
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7. The method of claim 1, wherein a buyer commitment to the transaction is obtained by means of currency submitted to a trusted third party prior to the generation of

said random number.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is specified by the buyer in response to a query.

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9. The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is generated from a serial number obtained from paper currency provided by the buyer.

10. The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is generated from a numeric identifier obtained from a product associated with said transaction.

11. The method of claim 5, wherein the seller generated random number is made without access to said buyer-provided offset value.

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12. A method for processing a transaction, comprising:  
determining a purchase price,  $N.C$ , for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost,  $p$ , equal to  $C/100$ , that exceeds a whole-unit amount,  $N$ ;   
generating a random number; and  
rounding said purchase price up to a price of  $N+1$  units with a probability of  $p$  and down to a price of  $N$  units with a probability of  $(1-p)$ .

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13. The method of claim 12, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.

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14. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of obtaining a buyer commitment to the transaction.

15. A method for processing a transaction, comprising:  
determining a purchase price,  $N.C$ , for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost,  $p$ , equal to  $C/100$ , that exceeds a whole-unit amount,  $N$ ;  
receiving an amount of  $X$  units from a buyer, where  $X$  is greater than  $N$ ;  
5 generating a random number; and  
rounding said purchase price up to a price of  $X$  units with a probability of  $((N + p) / X)$  and down to a price of zero units with a probability of  $1 - ((N + p) / X)$ .
16. The method of claim 15, wherein said step of generating a random number  
10 is performed in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.
17. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of obtaining a buyer commitment to the transaction.
- 15 18. A system for processing a transaction, comprising:  
a memory that stores computer-readable code; and  
a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured to implement said computer-readable code, said computer-readable code configured to:  
determine a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price  
20 including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;  
generate a random number; and  
round said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.
- 25 19. The system of claim 18, wherein said random number is generated in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.

20. The system of claim 18, wherein said processor is further configured to obtain a buyer commitment to the transaction.

21. The system of claim 18, wherein said purchase price, N.C, for said transaction includes a fractional cost, p, equal to  $C/100$ , that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N, and said purchase price is rounded up to a price of N+1 units with a probability of p and rounded down to a price of N units with a probability of (1-p).

22. The system of claim 18, wherein said purchase price, N.C, for said transaction includes a fractional cost, p, equal to  $C/100$ , that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N and wherein an amount of X units is received from a buyer, where X is greater than N, and wherein said purchase price is rounded up to a price of X units with a probability of  $((N + p) / X)$  and rounded down to a price of zero units with a probability of  $1 - ((N + p) / X)$ .

23. An article of manufacture for processing a transaction, comprising:  
a computer readable medium having computer readable code means embodied thereon, said computer readable program code means comprising:  
a step to determine a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;  
a step to generate a random number; and  
a step to round said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.